

II EuroAgeism online training-school: Policy, science and practice



Evidence informed policy
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Outline of Presentation:

1. Introduction and Definitions: Policy, Social Policy, Policy Process, Policy Bases
2. Types of Evidence for Policymaking
3. Navigating the Waters of Evidence: Synthesized Evidence
4. Relationships between Research and Policymaking
5. Bridging the Gap Between Research and Policy: Models
6. Conclusion: Factors Influencing Evidence Based Policymaking

1. Introduction and Definitions



1. Introduction & Definitions

What is POLICY?

A course, or principle of action, adopted or proposed by a government, party, business or individual

The Concise Oxford Dictionary

What is PUBLIC POLICY?

The course of *action* (or *inaction*) taken by the state with regard to a particular issue.

Robert Wolf

1. Introduction & Definitions

What is SOCIAL POLICY?

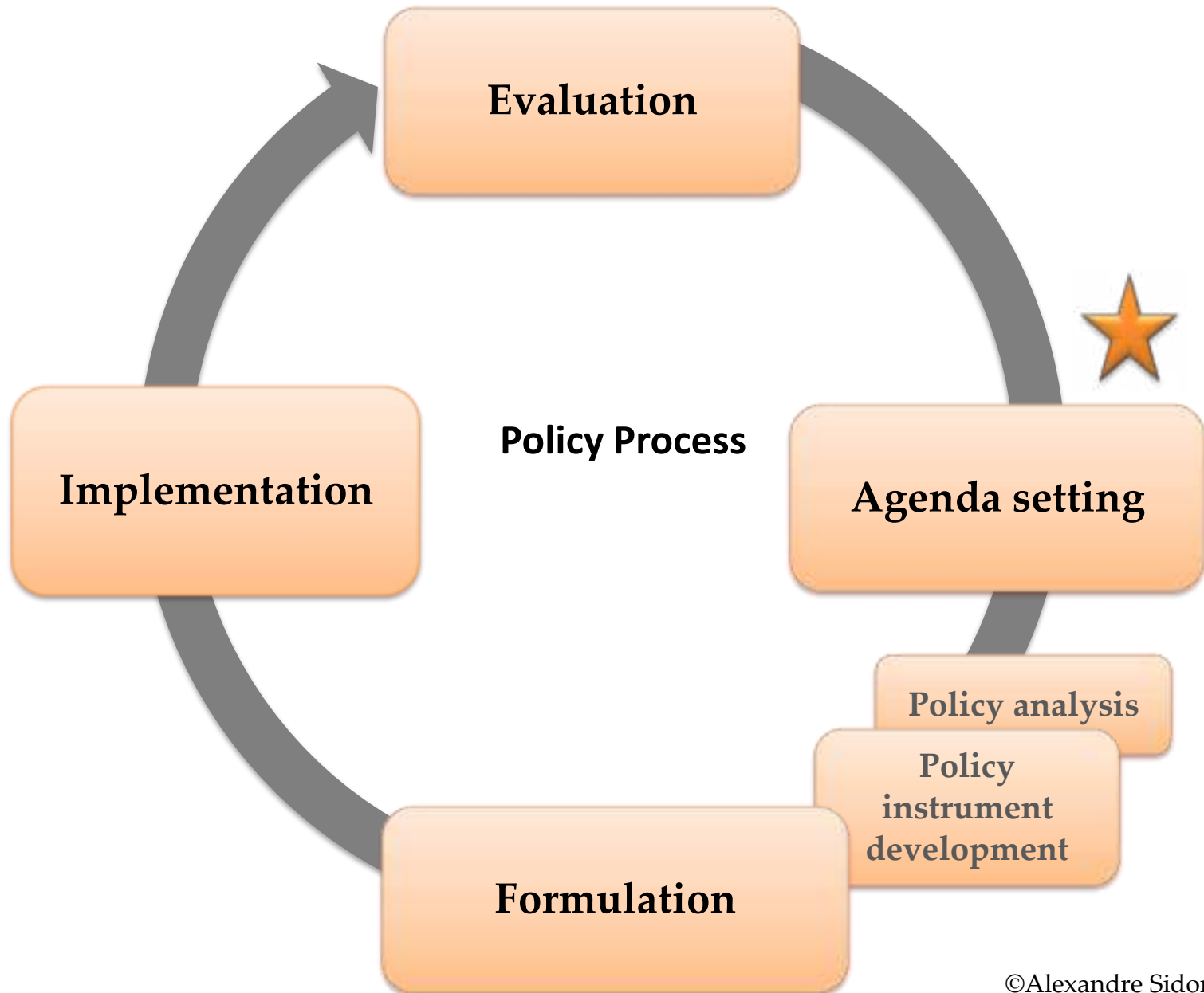
Statements aimed to improve human welfare and to meet human needs for education, health, housing, and social security.

Blakemore & Griggs, 2007

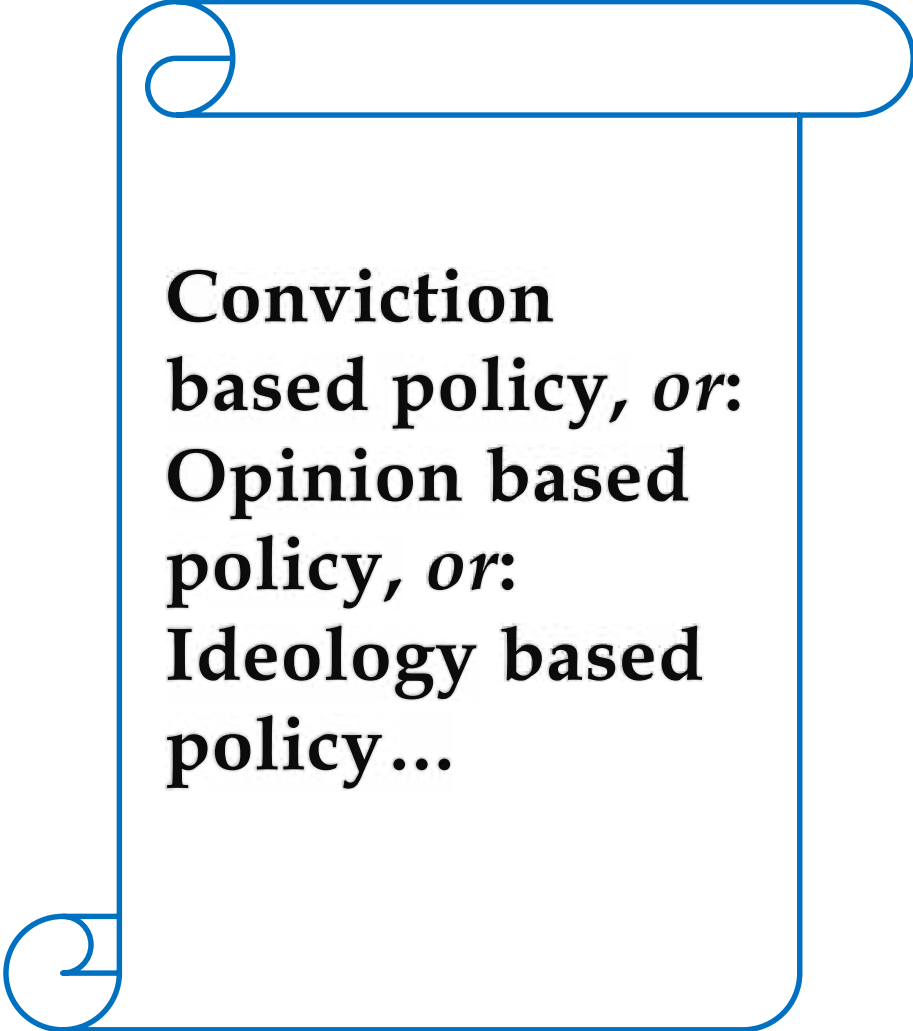
Deliberate intervention by the state to redistribute resources amongst its citizens so as to achieve a welfare objective.

Baldock, Manning & Vickerstaff, 2007

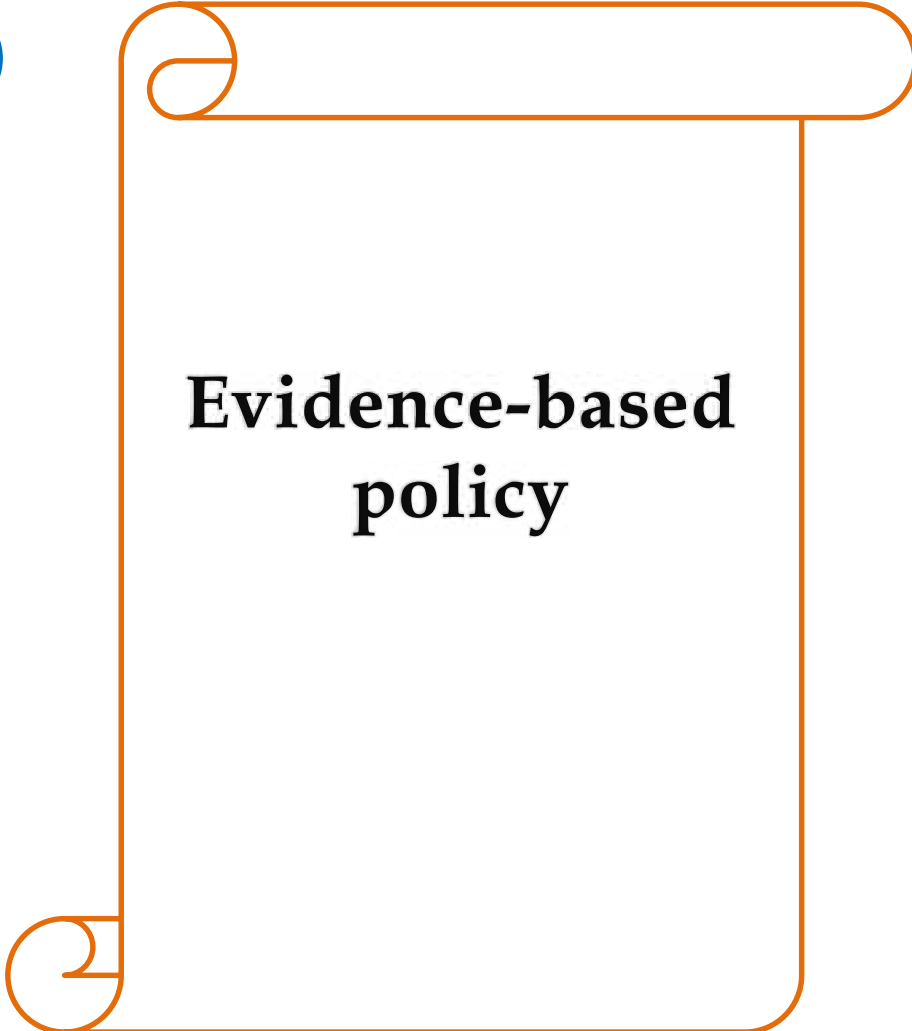
1. Introduction & Definitions



Policy Bases

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**Conviction
based policy, *or*:
Opinion based
policy, *or*:
Ideology based
policy...**

An orange-outlined scroll graphic with a rolled-up top edge and a curled bottom-left corner, framing the text on the right.

**Evidence-based
policy**

Conviction based policy, or: Opinion based policy, or: Ideology based policy...

Conviction based policy is the political practice based on a person's (*politician's*) own fundamental *values* or *ideas* rather than attempting to represent an existing consensus based on evidence

Evidence-based policy

is a political practice (or an approach) that "helps people make well informed decisions about policies, programmes and projects by putting the best available evidence from research at the heart of policy development and implementation"

Davies, 2004

Conviction based policy, or:
Opinion based policy, or:
Ideology based policy...

“For policy makers, even the most solid research evidence can be rejected as “dense” or “academic” when it challenges strongly held *beliefs* or *goals*. Less reliable or “soft” research results are often embraced by decision makers when those results support the *value system* in place.

Clements, 2004

Margaret Thatcher:

"I believe that by taking together key elements from the Old and New Testaments, we gain a view of the universe, a proper attitude to work and principles to shape economic and social life."

Christianity and Wealth, Speech to the Church of Scotland General Assembly, May 21, 1988.

2. Types of Evidence for Policymaking



2. Types of Evidence for Policymaking

Categories of Evidence for Policymaking

Research evidence

“any systematic effort to increase the stock of knowledge”

(OECD, 1981)

Capacity evidence

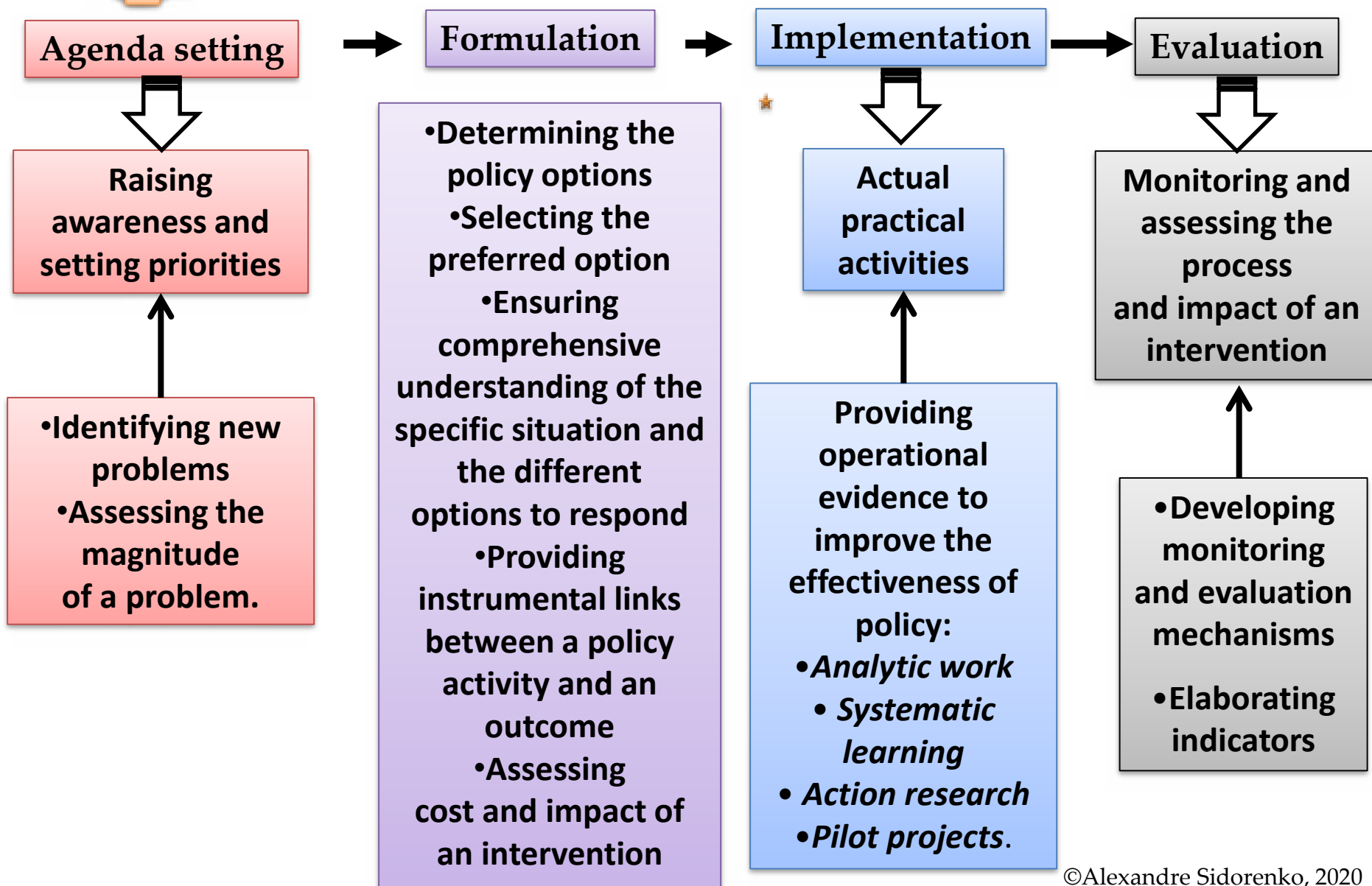
information on societal capacity to address and complete the policy tasks: *infrastructure /institutions; human resources; financial resources...*

Public & Political evidence

information about how the public, politicians and media will react to a proposed policy, helping or hindering the success of policy action.



Stages of Policy Process & Evidence Requirements



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Adopted from Pollard and Court (2005)

Types of Evidence by Sources & Methods

Systematic Reviews and meta-analyses

- use research evidence that has been *systematically searched, critically appraised, and rigorously analysed* according to explicit and transparent criteria. Limitations: long duration

Rapid evidence assessments and interim evidence assessments

- are used to provide *real time* research synthesis . Limitations: can be unbalanced and unrepresentative

Single Studies –

If undertaken to the highest possible standards, they can provide valuable and focussed evidence. Limitations: less specific about the *variability* of subjects (e.g. population groups), *contexts* and *conditions* under which policies might work or not work.

Pilot Studies and Case Studies –

are used primarily for *guiding policy implementation*, particularly at its earlier phases. Limitations: narrow utilization (ongoing policy implementation)

Experts' Evidence –

expert advisory groups or special advisers. Limitations: selectivity of knowledge and expertise; ensuring that the expertise being provided is up to date and well grounded in the most recent research evidence.

Internet Evidence –

Limitations: provided 'evidence' can be **either scientifically or politically biased, or both; uncertain scientific and political basis...**

Types of Evidence by Areas of Inquiry

Impact Evidence

- impact of policy on its outcomes (e.g., Campbell Collaboration)

Implementation Evidence

- Studying effectiveness of the implementation and delivery of policies, programmes and projects. Methodology: mostly qualitative research, e.g. in-depth interviews, focus groups, other consultative methods (such as the Delphi and Nominal Group methods), observational methods, participant-observation methods, and social surveys.

Public Attitudes and Understanding

- Assessing citizens' perceptions, experiences and understanding of policy. Methodology: qualitative research designs and social survey methods.

Economic Evidence

- Evaluating the cost, cost-benefit and cost-effectiveness of policies. Methodology: economic appraisal and evaluation methods, including econometric analysis and modelling.

Ethical Evidence

- Informing decisions that involve trade-offs between one policy and another, or one group and another. Such action requires evidence of relative effectiveness, relative costs, people's perceptions and experiences, and of the social justice and ethics of doing so.

2. Types of Evidence for Policymaking

Key characteristics of “good evidence for policy”

Accurate & Objective:

correctly describes what it purports to do.

Credible & Reliable:

relies on a strong and clear line of argument, tried and tested analytical methods, and on clear presentation of the conclusions (Shaxson, 2005). *Reputation of the source* matters.

Relevant (salient):

is timely, topical, generalisable and has policy implications.

Practical:

is *accessible* to policymakers; it can be easily *translated* into policy; it is *feasible* and *affordable*.

3. Navigating the Waters of Evidence: Synthesized Evidence



3. Synthesized evidence

Synthesizing evidence is the process of bringing together *information* and *knowledge from many sources and disciplines* to inform debates and decisions.

Synthesized evidence should be (ideally):

Up to date

Complete

Accurate

Concise

Unbiased

Originated
from various
(not single)
sources

Types of synthesis:

Formal Systematic Review

(May take from several months to several years)

Platforms:

Cochrane (<http://uk.cochrane.org>)

The Campbell Collaboration
(www.campbellcollaboration.org)

Rapid Drawing Together of Evidence - to inform an emergency situation

Platform:

Oxford Martin Restatements
(<https://www.oxfordmartin.ox.ac.uk/publications/restatements/>)

FOUR PRINCIPLES –

to follow in order to help researchers, policymakers and others to commission, do, share, appraise and use **EVIDENCE SYNTHESSES**.

INCLUSIVE

- Involves policymakers and is relevant and useful to them
- Considers many types and sources of evidence
- Uses a range of skills and people.

RIGOROUS

- Uses the most comprehensive feasible body of evidence
- Recognizes and minimizes bias
- Is independently reviewed as part of a quality-assurance process.

TRANSPARENT

- Clearly describes the research question, methods, sources of evidence and quality-assurance process
- Communicates complexities and areas of contention
- Acknowledges assumptions, limitations and uncertainties, including any evidence gaps
- Declares personal, political and organizational interests and manages any conflicts.

ACCESSIBLE

- Is written in plain language
- Is available in a suitable time frame
- Is freely available online.

“New tools aim to tame pandemic paper tsunami”

Science, 2020

“The COVID-19 literature has grown to more than 31,000 papers since January and by one estimate is on pace to hit more than 52,000 by mid-June—among the biggest explosions of scientific literature ever”

Meanwhile...

...as many as 20% of new papers are still behind paywalls and off-limits to some readers and AI analysis. By June 1, 2020 nearly half of all COVID-19 papers were estimated to be behind paywalls.

...Some of the new search tools aren't very user- friendly or are little known.

CORD-19: COVID-19 Open Research Dataset

- the archive that includes more than 128,000 peer-reviewed articles and preprints, including studies of virology and coronaviruses dating back decades

<https://www.semanticscholar.org/cord19>

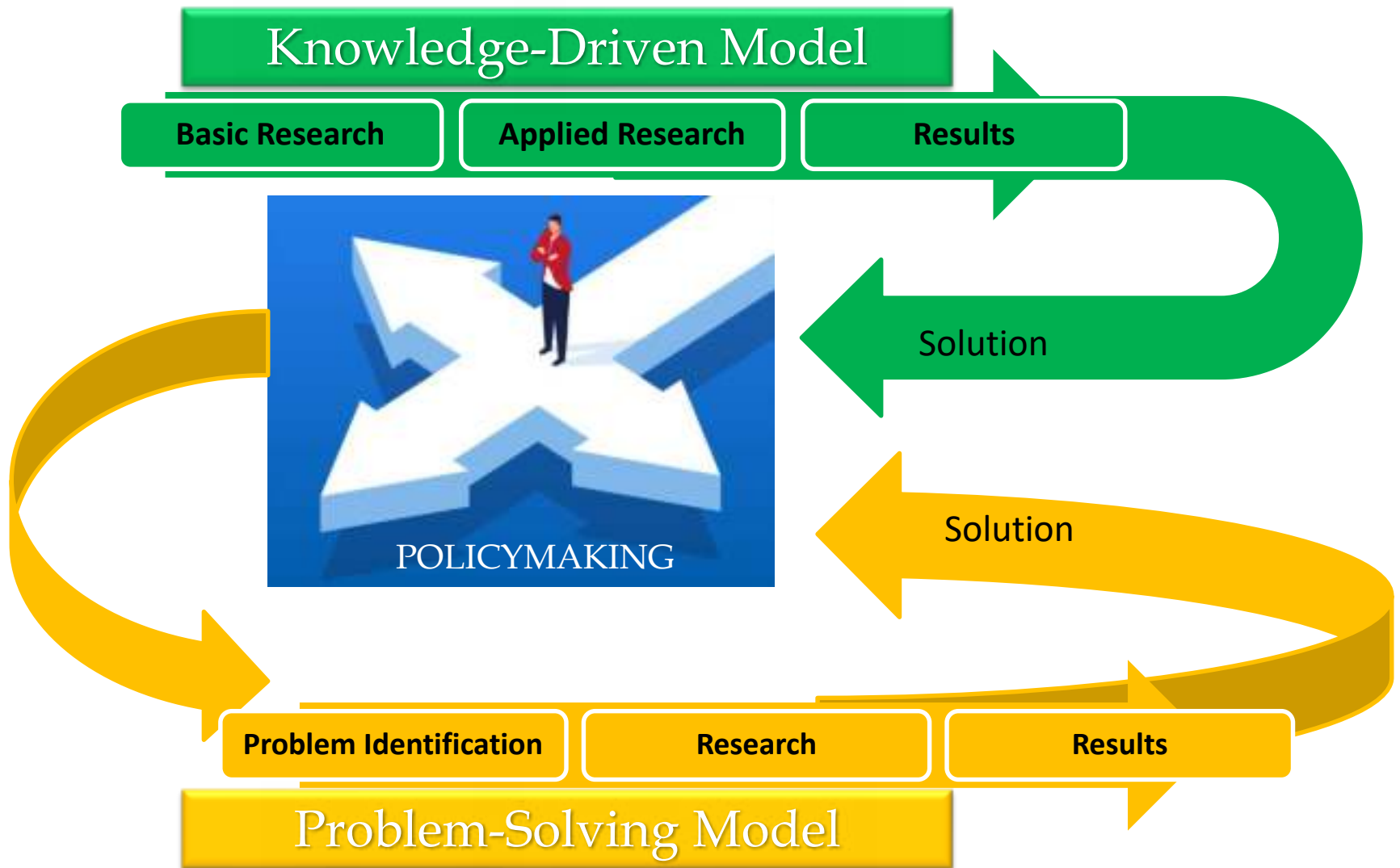


To create the archive, some of the largest groups active in machine learning—including Google, the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative, and the Allen Institute for AI—collaborated with the National Institutes of Health (USA) and others to use search methods, such as natural language processing, to scan the scientific literature for relevant terms.

4. Relationships between Research and Policymaking



Models of using research in policymaking: Linear *versus* Circular



4. Relationships between Research and Policymaking

Relations between research and policymaking:

“... the interaction between policymakers and researchers is limited by the divergence of these two worlds. They use different languages and have different *priorities, agendas, timescales* and *reward systems*. As a consequence, a **communication gap** often exists.”

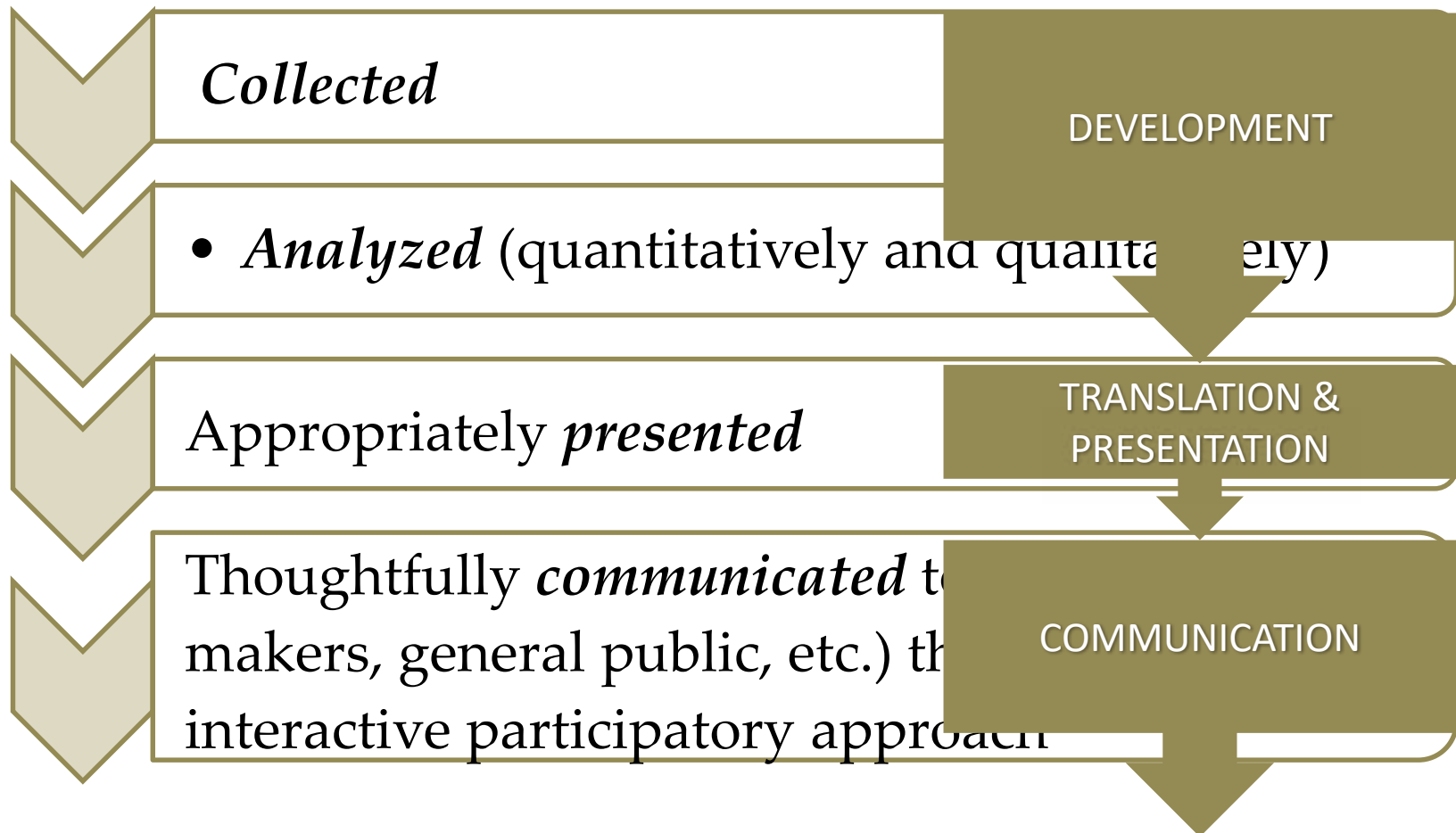
Nutley, 2003

3. Relationships between Research and Policymaking



Evidence for Policymaking: The Process

Information (Data) for Evidence-Informed Policy has to be...



Communicating Evidence for Policymaking

RESEARCH



POLICY

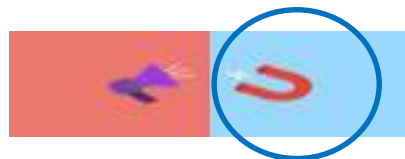


PUSH & PULL



Practical Strategies to Bring Research into Policy: *PUSH EFFORTS*

Know who you want to reach	➤ Not necessarily the highest political level – e.g., local authority ➤ Also outside the government: non-profit organizations (NGOs), industry groups, advocacy organizations and private sector companies
Formulate clear and actionable recommendations	➤ No slogans/plea → specific objectives and tasks ➤ Suggestions are feasible (budgetary and mission constrains) ➤ The pros and cons of different policy options are laid out
Repackage your work	➤ Formulations are in accessible and understandable format ➤ Key findings and recommendations are synthesized into a short policy brief, blog or opinion piece
Write well: Organization, brevity and clarity	➤ Key points are to be stated first, followed by more explanation ➤ A clear one-sentence takeaway in the first paragraph ➤ Headings to separate sections, visual cues, such as bullets, to draw attention to key points ➤ Technical terms are defined and acronyms are spelt out ➤ Document is read by non-experts
Select when to engage	➤ Advantages of earlier stages of terms (post-election) to approach politicians ➤ Political and public situation is considered
Sustain and amplify your engagement	➤ Partnering with people and institutions who have similar agenda ➤ Follow up!



Practical Strategies to Bring Research into Policy: *PULL EFFORTS*

Integrating Research into Professional Competence of Policy Makers and Practitioners	Joint training and professional development opportunities for policy makers, practitioners and analysts. <u>The necessary knowledge</u>: what kinds of social, economic and policy research are available? How to gain access to them and critically appraise them? ...
Ownership of the Evidence	Getting policy makers and practitioners to own the evidence needed to support and implement policy effectively. <u>The necessary prerequisites</u>: involving policy makers and practitioners in planning the research; transparency and accessibility of evidence...
'Buy-In'	Getting senior policy officials to commit themselves to the policy project and the evidence that comes to support it.
Shared Notions of Evidence	Agreement between policy makers and researchers on the most appropriate evidence that will help solve policy problems. <u>Measures</u>: Agreeing on a strategic approach to evidence based policy development; establishing integrated teams of policy officials, researchers, et al. who have to design and implement policy.
Incentives to Use Evidence	Assessing effectiveness and efficiency of government policy actions against set targets (goals)
Availability of Sound Evidence	Development of research synthesis (e.g., Cochrane, Campbell Collaborations et al.)

4. Relationships between Research and Policymaking

Policymaking is inherently a political process
Nutley, 2003



'There is nothing a government hates more than to be well-informed; for it makes the process of arriving at decisions much more complicated and difficult.'

John Maynard Keynes

4. Relationships between Research and Policymaking

What is politics?

- The art and science of government.
- Public life and affairs as involving authority and government.
(The Concise Oxford Dictionary)

Policy process and political process are closely linked. Political process, and particularly, political cycle with periodical elections, influence the policy process. **An ongoing concern of politicians is their prospect for reelection.** Thus they want to be identified with policies that are regarded favourably by the electorate and by financial contributors to their election campaigns, even at the expense of policies that may be more effective for solving problems, but look less favourably.

4. Relationships between Research and Policymaking

Elements shaping the behavior of politicians as they engage in policy process:

(1) Politicians prefer to embrace and support policies that are immodest - dramatic and ambitious

E.g., instead of announcing policies for getting more and better qualified personnel in nursing homes, they will declare policies that promise to older persons *“the best possible physical and mental health which science can make available...”*

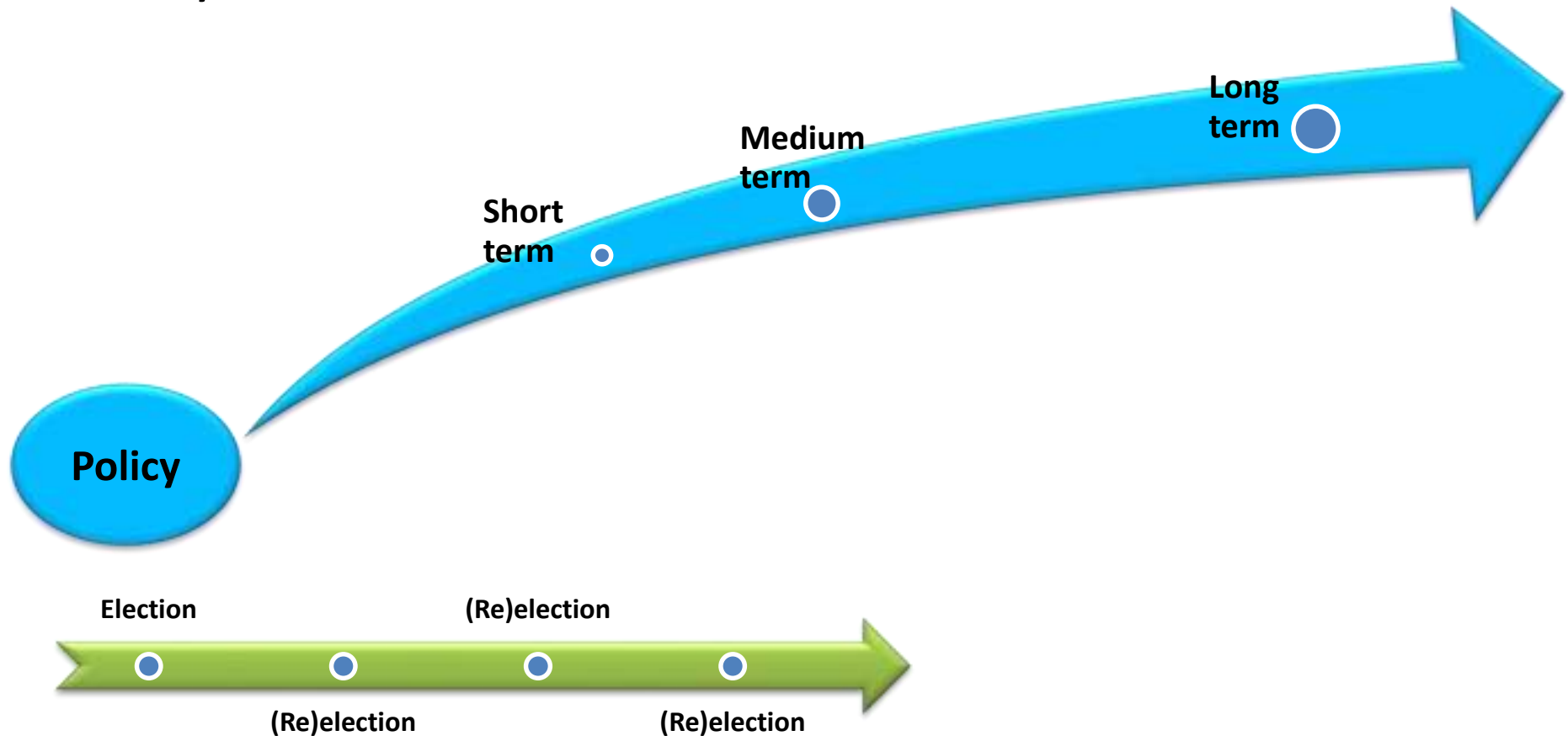
(2) Politicians want policies that lend themselves to tangible, particularly quantifiable results

E.g., a policy to improve nutrition of older persons must include tangible outcomes, such as the *number* and location of nutritional programmes in operation, and/or the *number* of meals served to older persons. *Nutritional value of the meals or the nutritional status of those who have eaten them are not politically necessary.*

(3) Politicians want quick (within election cycle) results.

4. Relationships between Research and Policy Making

Policy Process & Political Process



5. Bridging the Gap Between Research and Policy: Models

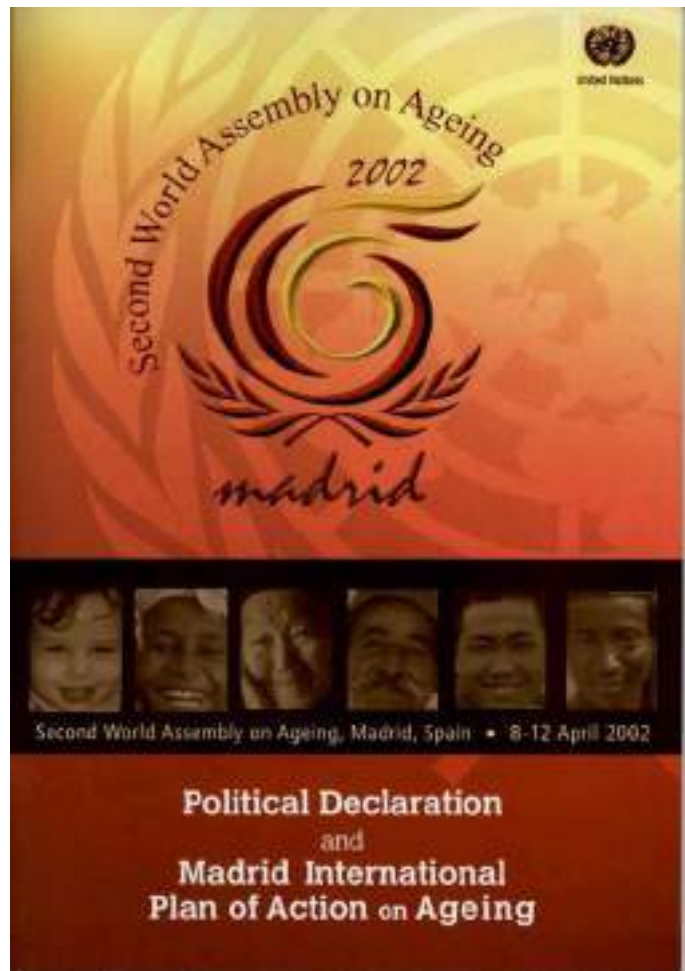


Priority Directions for Policy Action:

**I. Older Persons and
Development**

**II. Advancing Health and
Wellbeing into Old Age**

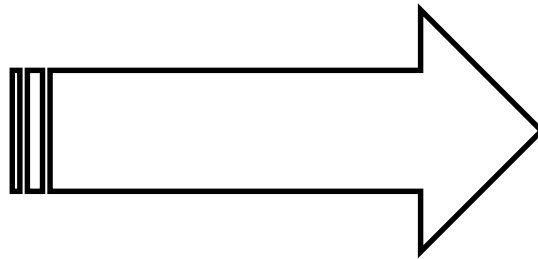
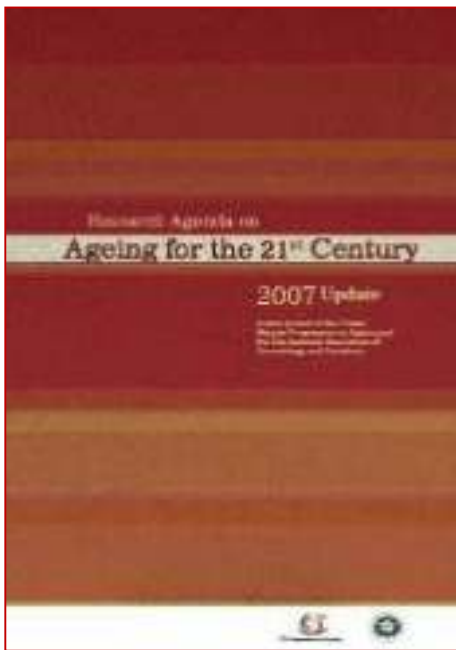
**III. Ensuring Enabling
and Supportive
Environments**



5. Bridging the Gap Between Research and Policy: Models



Research Agenda on Ageing for the 21st Century:



<http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/ageing/documents/AgeingResearchAgenda-6.pdf>



UN Programme
on Ageing

Research Agenda on Ageing for the 21st Century



**XVI World
Congress of
IAG**
**Adelaide,
Australia**
August 1997



**First Expert
Consultation**
**Vienna,
Austria**
**February
1999**



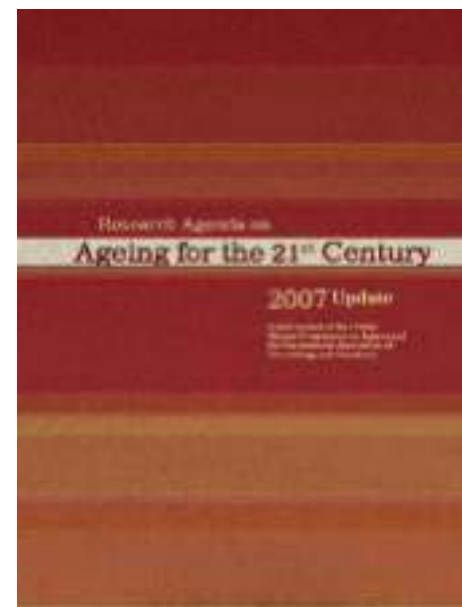
**Second
Expert
Consultation**
**New York,
USA**
**November
1999**



**Third Expert
Consultation**
**Salsomaggiore,
Italy**
December 2000



RAA-21: Evolution





Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing



Research Agenda on Ageing

Major Research Priorities

Priority 1. Relationships of population ageing and socio-economic development

Priority 2. Current practices and options for maintaining material security in old age

Priority 3. Changing family structures, intergenerational transfer systems and emergent family and institutional dynamics

Priority 4. Determinants of healthy ageing

Priority 5. Basic biological mechanisms and age associated diseases

Priority 6. Quality of Life and Ageing in diverse cultural, socio-economic and environmental situations

Priority 3. Changing family structures, intergenerational transfer systems and emergent family and institutional dynamics.

Priority 6. Quality of Life and Ageing in diverse cultural, socio-economic and environmental situations.

Critical Research Areas

1. Social Participation and Integration.
2. Economic Security
3. Macro-Societal Change and Development
4. Poverty
5. Social Security Systems

6. Healthy Ageing
7. Biomedical
8. Physical & Mental Functioning
9. Quality of Life

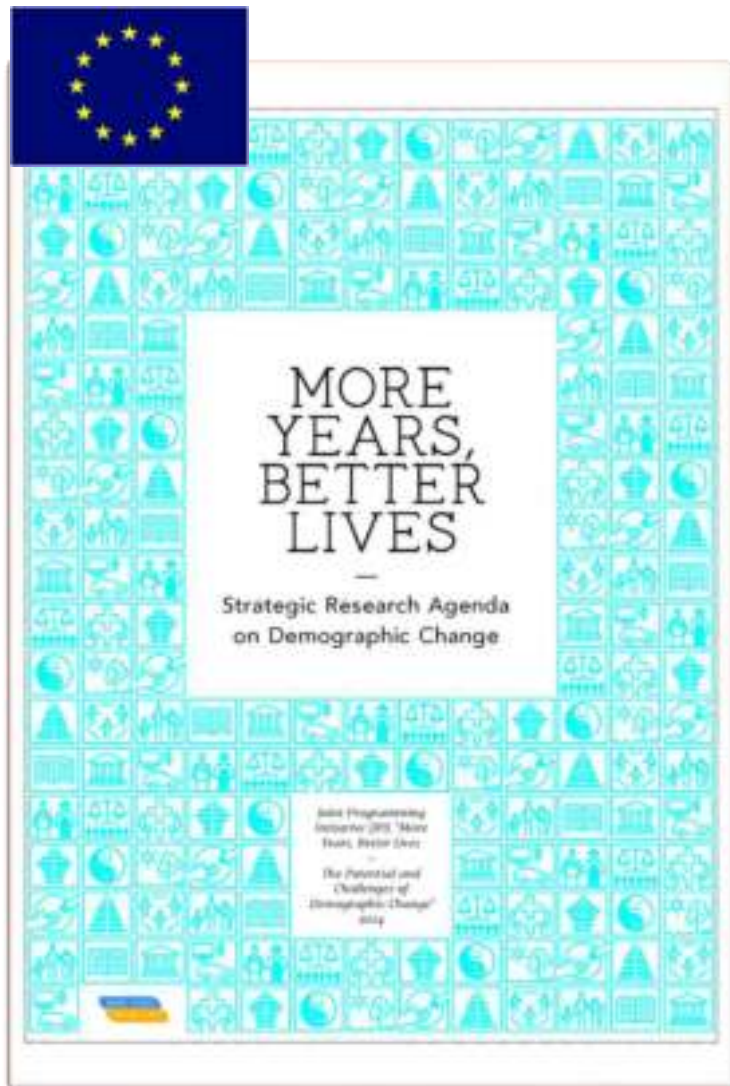
10. Care Systems
11. Changing Structures & Functions of Families

**Priority direction I:
Older Persons and
Development**

**Priority direction II:
Advancing health and
well-being into old age**

**Priority direction III:
Ensuring enabling and
supportive
environments**

4. Bridging the Gap Between Research and Policy: Models



FOUR RESEARCH DOMAINS OF THE STRATEGIC RESEARCH AGENDA:

Quality of life, health and wellbeing

Economic and social production

Governance and institutions

Sustainable welfare

<http://www.jp-demographic.eu/about-us/strategic-research-agenda-sra/>

IRELAND



National Positive Ageing Strategy

Published by the Department of Health (2013):

Goal 1: Remove barriers to participation and provide more opportunities for the continued involvement of people as they age in all aspects of cultural, economic and social life in their communities

Goal 2: Support people as they age to maintain, improve or manage their physical and mental health and wellbeing

Goal 3: Enable people to age with confidence, security and dignity in their own homes for as long as possible

Goal 4: Support and use research about people as they age to better inform policy responses to population ageing in Ireland

Cross-cutting objectives: combating ageism and improving information provision



What needs to be done?

Objective 4.1

Continue to employ an evidence-informed approach to decision-making at all levels of planning.

Objective 4.2

Promote the development of a comprehensive framework for gathering data in relation to all aspects of ageing and older people to underpin evidence-informed policy making.



Healthy and Positive Ageing for All Research Strategy 2015-2019



GOALS:

1. To raise awareness amongst researchers of the challenges posed by older people's health and wellbeing;
2. To build evidence on the four pillars of research to inform and improve conditions for positive ageing in Ireland;
3. To strengthen communication and inform whole-of-government policy about new evidence relating to ageing; and
4. To increase capacity and capability to conduct high quality innovative research on ageing.

PRINCIPLES THAT WILL GUIDE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THIS STRATEGY:

- Acting to improve positive impact;
- Acting in partnership to deliver integrative research;
 - Acting to ensure relevancy;
- Acting to increase capacity and capability to conduct excellent research;
 - Acting in an ethical manner; and
 - Acting openly and responsibly.

6. Conclusion: Factors Influencing Evidence Based Policymaking

Factors influencing evidence based policymaking:

- ☐ Weak economic conditions: resources for research and policy are scarce
- ☐ Difficult political environments: political volatility tends to have a negative impact on the use of evidence in policy processes
- ☐ Conditions of conflict: civil wars or low intensity conflicts limit the application of evidence-based policy
- ☐ Lack of accountability and participation
- ☐ Limited academic and media freedom and low civil society strength
- ☐ Corruption and lack of incentives/capacity to draw in evidence in policy implementation
- ☐ Predominance of populism and ignorance



RESEARCH & INNOVATIONS

Horizon

The EU Research & Innovation Magazine

Science vs fake news – the fight is on

31 March 2017

“Call it fake news, false content, or propaganda, either way we are in a new era of misinformation and it’s influencing elections and fueling extremism all around the world.”



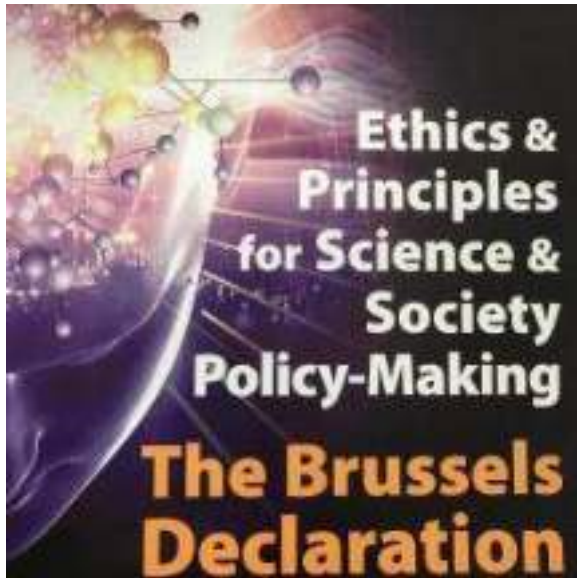
‘People are no longer willing to accept scientific advice on trust. Scientific advice must go a step further and explain the evidence base. It must also bring different perspectives from social sciences, from arts and humanities, from big data. It must connect the dots.’

Carlos Moedas, European Commissioner for Science, Research and Innovation



Conference “Science and Policy Making: towards a new dialogue», 29 - 30 September 2016





Text adopted on 17th February, 2017 during an announcement symposium at the American Association for the Advancement of Science's Annual Meeting (AAAS) held in Boston, MA, USA.

We call upon all stakeholders – governments, scientists, industry and the public at large – to cooperate in a joint effort to ensure reliable, evidence-based policy-making for the benefit of society as a whole. The alternative, in our view, is a continued dangerous slide into the realm of policy-biased evidence.

... it is in all our interests that we benefit from **‘evidence-based policy-making’** rather than suffer **‘policy-biased evidence’**.

<http://21ax0w3am0j23cz0gd1q1n3u.wpengine.netdna-cdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Brussels-Declaration.pdf>



Thank you



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